

Statements by Ministers

I would now appreciate it, please, if the Hon. Member speaking for the Liberal Party could perhaps be afforded the same courtesy in the House.

[*English*]

Mr. Garneau: Mr. Speaker, it is a very serious matter. I do not want to joke about it, and certainly not take those interruptions from the Minister of Public Works who knows nothing about banking except to borrow from the bank.

Worst of all, Mr. Speaker, now we have been told that the parliamentary committee will not be allowed to look very carefully into those two bank failures. In fact, we have been told that a judge has been appointed, and don't tell us that it is not due to the fact that the Member from the Liberal Party tried to ask for more detail before going into the parliamentary committee. I do not know what they have to hide but the Minister has certainly refused to appear before the TV camera in the parliamentary committee. The Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) of this country had promised Canadians a televised inquiry. What are they hiding now, and don't give us the Irish blarney.

An Hon. Member: Another broken promise.

An Hon. Member: What are you afraid of?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Garneau: Mr. Speaker, it is a sad day for Canada when in a matter of weeks, we are now informed of the failure of a second bank.

I think we should consider this as a matter involving the Minister's credibility. That is why I said there was a paragraph missing from this long 24-page statement, a paragraph containing the resignation of the Minister of State (Finance) (Mrs. McDougall) and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson).

On March 29 of this year, the Minister said here in the House that with the exception of the Canadian Commercial Bank, no other financial institution was either in difficulty or appeared to be in difficulty. And now she says in her statement that she had been aware of the problems of the Northland Bank since March!

Mr. Speaker, there is the issue of credibility which is extremely important. If the Minister wants to discuss the bank question and obtain the co-operation of the Members of this House on this very important matter, she must realize that her statements must be consistent. If she does not know the answers, she should remain silent. But she should not tell Canadians that no other bank in this country is or appears to be in financial difficulty.

Why do I hesitate today to ask the Minister: Is there another financial institution in danger? Mr. Speaker, I dare not ask the question because I am afraid I will not be told the truth.

An Hon. Member: Right on!

Mr. Garneau: It is a very serious matter. For instance, here is what the Minister said in her statement today:

[*English*]

"These banks were particularly vulnerable when the resource based boom in western Canada came to an abrupt end".

[*Translation*]

Compare today's statement with her remarks to the House last March 25 when she told the people of Canada and Members of the House that the difficulties experienced by the Canadian Commercial Bank stemmed from those loans in California.

Will the Government today, considering the dreadful situation which undermines the security of our entire banking system—

• (1530)

Will the Minister of State . . . and so far the Minister of Finance has refused to assume his responsibilities under the Act. By means of a letter you may delegate certain administrative responsibilities to a Minister of State, but the bottom line is that the Minister of Finance has the ultimate responsibility under the provisions of the Act. I find it rather strange that in such a serious situation he would let the Minister of State (Finance) face the music and assume the responsibilities, while in fact he is the one who should have risen to make the statement.

An Hon. Member: He is scared!

Mr. Garneau: Mr. Speaker, if the Minister expects cooperation from the House she will have to be more careful with her statements. If she wants our cooperation she will have now only to tell us the truth but also appear as if she were telling the truth. Again I would refer to her statements of March 25 and 29 when she said:

[*English*]

Mr. Chairman, this situation was caused by an isolated incident.

She was speaking about the CCB.

There are no other financial institutions in the country at the moment that are appearing to be insolvent in any way.

[*Translation*]

It is a very specific statement. If the Minister wants us to cooperate with her with respect to the Bill she is planning to introduce, she will have to learn to tell the whole truth or refrain from commenting on things which she does not know anything about.

Now I would like to say something about the appointment of Mr. Justice Estey. In my opinion, Mr. Speaker, it is totally inappropriate, particularly after the statements made recently by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court to a gathering of well known lawyers—I think it was in Halifax where he said it was "inappropriate"—to ask a judge of the Supreme Court to